

HARVEST SIZE LIMIT

**“Determine whether 40 acre maximum size limit for regeneration
timber harvest areas should be continued”**

Reference period: 2004-2006

From 2004 to 2006 no regeneration timber harvest units exceeded 40 (forty) acres on the Gallatin National Forest. During this timeframe, the Gallatin National Forest did not request approval from Region One for any regeneration timber harvest units exceeding 40 acres.

Over the last decade, there has been a shift from traditional even age regeneration cuts to large scale, watershed level vegetation management restoration and fuel reduction projects. Historically the Gallatin National Forest experienced large scale stand replacing fires and insect outbreaks across the landscape in patches well in excess of 40 acres. Although many of the restoration projects currently use intermediate silvicultural prescriptions, and not clearcuts, it is not unreasonable to think that future fuel reduction or restoration treatments in some habitat types (eg. Lodgepole pine, subalpine fir, whitebark pine) would use regeneration harvest prescriptions (clearcut, seed tree or shelterwood) that would need to be in excess of the 40-acre maximum size limit to achieve the desired results. Limiting harvest units to 40 acres or less greatly reduces the options for large scale ecosystem management. However, there are also possible negative effects to consider such as fragmentation of habitats and roads.

It is recommended, in conclusion, that the maximum 40-acre regeneration harvest unit be used as a guide and not be a mandate. Criteria for consideration for larger units would include the purpose and need for the project, the desired future condition for a given area, as well as the habitat types and departure from historical fire regimes.